



OFFICE OF THE FIRST SELECTMAN

Michael R. Criss
First Selectman, Town of Harwinton

HOUSING COMMITTEE

February 28th, 2023

Good afternoon, my name is Michael R. Criss, I am the First Selectman for the Town of Harwinton and I am submitting testimony regarding H.B. 6781 "An Act Addressing Housing Affordability for Residents in the State".

H.B. 6781 "An Act Concerning a Needs Assessment Addressing Housing Affordability for Residents in the State".

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and submit testimony on proposed bill "An Act Addressing Housing Affordability for Residents in the State." The Town of Harwinton is opposed to H.B. 6781.

As drafted, HB-6781, Section 24, eliminates the requirement that municipalities prepare an Affordable Housing Plan and update the plan every five years under Sec. 8-30j, Connecticut General Statutes (CGS). Instead, it replaces the existing planning requirement with a requirement to adopt a plan "to affirmatively further fair housing for the municipality" to be approved by OMP. Withholds discretionary funding if not in compliant.

Municipalities have invested considerable time and resources in developing affordable housing plans, including performing housing needs assessments and identifying barriers to affordable housing. We are concerned that HB-6781 ignores these planning efforts and, instead, imposes a duplicative and confusing planning requirement on municipalities.

Under existing law, municipalities are required in their planning and zoning laws to "affirmatively further fair housing". This has long been required under the federal Fair Housing Act and recently codified in Connecticut statute under Public Act 21-29. Accordingly, mandating that municipalities develop a plan to affirmatively further fair housing is unnecessary. It is also confusing given the other state and federal laws governing fair housing issues.

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Municipalities and regional Councils of Government are devoting significant time and resources in performing affordable housing needs assessments and developing and updating plans, which will provide municipalities with a strong foundation for supporting more affordable housing to meet the needs of their communities. We are concerned that HB-6781 undermines these efforts.

In addition, COST is actively participating in the Commission on Connecticut's Future and Development which is charged with developing recommendations to advance the state's affordable housing goals. COST sits on the Commission's Affordable Housing Plan Working Group which has recently finalized its recommendations relative to affordable housing plans.

These comprehensive, stakeholder driven efforts are the appropriate mechanism for developing recommendations to promote affordable housing. This cannot be a one size fits all approach.

We urge lawmakers to OPPOSE HB-6781.

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony in opposition of H.B. 6633 on behalf of the Town of Harwinton. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Michael R. Criss
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Legislative Chair, Northwest Hills Council of Governments

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